



CDSC Hexham & Newcastle

Newsletter No. 4

Summer 2023

Good news is all around us! Yes, we have every reason to believe that the Lord is helping us to grow his church here in the second half of 2023. The Church has welcomed two newly ordained priests and two new deacons. Better still, we have Rt Rev Stephen Wright as the 15th Bishop of our diocese. His Episcopal installation was witnessed by a packed cathedral full of parishioners from all over the diocese in the presence of civic dignitaries, Papal Nuncio, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishops and many Bishops, and priests and deacons from all over the country and within the diocese. The CHARIS family welcomes him and looks forward to work with him in enhancing the faith life of many people around Hexham and Newcastle.

Moving ahead, our diocesan contingent was on annual diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes recently led by Bishop Stephen, even as the universal Catholic Church celebrated the World Youth Day in Lisbon led by Pope Francis. So, as we share the positive Catholic vibe of faith and celebration, let's remember to say a short prayer for the future of our diocese and the world around us, in light of these great witness of faith events; be it in Lourdes, Lisbon or around our own diocese, parishes and communities.

In the newsletter we have our regular column My life with the Holy Spirit contributed by Andy Drozdzia, News Editor and Social Media Manager of Universe Catholic Weekly who is a core member of the CDSC team, alongside reports of the recent past events including the report on OVERFLOW, the national gathering of CHARIS from all over England and Wales and some forthcoming events.

As we arrange and coordinate the efforts of Charismatic renewal within the diocese, let's hold each other in prayer, knowing that the Lord will help us grow and strengthen our faith life. Do stay connected by notifying us of your faith events, participating in the events we promote for faith nourishment within and outside the diocese, and remain blessed!



My Life with the Holy Spirit

a personal testimony

By Andy Drozdzia, CDSC core group member and News Editor and Social Media Manager of Universe Catholic Weekly

The Holy Spirit – The Helper

We call the Holy Spirit 'the Lord, the Giver of life.' We also read that the Spirit 'comes to help us in our weakness' (Romans 8:26) which I have witnessed on many occasions. One of the names which appeals to me concerning the Holy Spirit is 'the Helper': "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

In my own life, I have felt the need for 'the Helper' in times of struggle. I once went through a really difficult period where I could not get on with my job of teaching. I was unable to get the work done and was not much use at home, either. I saw my wife and children less and less, and our relationship suffered. Eventually, exhausted and upset, I was signed off work and I felt totally abandoned and washed out. In my despair, I called out to God. Where was He? I had tried to follow God faithfully, but I felt utterly exhausted and washed out. Would I ever work again? Would I be consigned to the scrapheap? I felt utterly alone, but it was at that moment that I cried out and God sent me His help – the 'Helper,' the Holy Spirit.

I received a text out of the blue from a trusted friend, who told me: "God's not finished with you yet." It was a brief text, but it affected me profoundly. My friend was reminding me that God was with me in my struggles, in my pain. I had not been prepared for that. The Spirit lives in our hearts, as Christ in us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). God is closer than our very breath and knows our lives intimately. This reality struck me that day – God felt my pain, my frustration and my weakness. He understood. I was able to turn to Him, by the Spirit's power, and say, with tears in my eyes: "Please help me, God. I'm desperate." The Spirit then showed me that God is ALWAYS willing to help. We really don't need to do it all ourselves and in our own power. I believe it is especially important for men to know this truth.

It was the beginning of a healing process where I continued to receive power from on high, from the Helper who kept reminding me of the Father's care and love, in the midst of distress. I didn't, and I still don't, get it right all the time. Yet I did eventually get back to work, in a new career. God went on to show me His new plans for me in marvellous and unexpected ways, for which I praise Him.

I have learnt that God's ways are not our ways. It's not up to us to fix everything, but for God all things are possible. His Spirit reassures of His love, care and patience. I still call on the Spirit today, who shows me the Father's love, and who helps me in times of weakness and struggle.

A Reflection by Kelechi Dibie on Alison Rebello's Diaconate Ordination on 8 July 2023

I arrived at the Cathedral Church of St Mary about 20 minutes before the start of Holy Mass. As I stepped onto the long corridor leading to the side entrance of the cathedral, a long queue of priests from our diocese met my eyes. It was a diverse representation of priests from different ethnicities, and all dressed in the cream white chasuble waiting to process into the cathedral. They all looked glorious! It made me so proud to be a Catholic, to see how all the brother priests and deacons came to support those about to be ordained.

Coming from a background with a total of five priests from both my paternal and maternal families, I had become used to both diaconate and priestly ordinations and knew what to expect. However, Alison's diaconate was special because I had known him as a married man with children who were friends with my children, who all attended the same school. Answering the call to serve the Lord is not particularly easy but Alison confidently answered this call. It is a journey that I have observed him make conscientiously for several months up to that day. I was delighted to have had a special invitation to attend his ordination. The Mass for Alison's diaconate ordination, alongside three other ordinands, began in with the best renditions by St Mary's Cathedral Choir, of hymns selected for the day. It was emotional hearing Alison's response to the call to be ordained as he answered loud and clear, "*...I am here, and I am ready.*"

It was my first time seeing a combined ordination of two priests and two deacons. It was nice to see the families of the deacons allocated roles during the Mass as lectors and carriers of the offertory gifts. The

Litany of the Saints sung towards the end felt like heaven had met the earth at that stage of the ceremony! I did not want the Holy Mass to end but, like all good things, it had to end at some point. I walked up to the family at the end of Mass to give one of the newest deacons in our diocese and his family big hugs. We all stood in front of the sanctuary to take photographs before everyone dispersed for the reception.

We pray that the Lord God pours generously unto Allison's life the Holy Spirit; fill him with love and compassion and equip him with the grace to perform the duties that he has been appointed to fulfil through Christ our Lord. Amen!

Diocesan Event Reports

Find Joy in the Journey – St Aidan's, Ashington

By John Wheeler, CDSC Coordinator for Hexham & Newcastle

Over five dozen people from across the diocese gathered at St Aidan's, Ashington, earlier in the year for a day organised by the Charismatic Diocesan Service of Communion in partnership with parishioners from the Northumberland Vicariate and the Diocesan Church Music Association (DCMA).

We very much appreciated the welcome and hospitality from Fr Purdy, and Margo. The day started with praise and worship led by musicians and singers from Couples for Christ, interspersed with two members sharing how they had found joy at particularly challenging times in their lives. Fr Shaun O'Neill then shared a reflection on the theme for the day.

Cherryl Lucero from the CDSC shared her experience of being in prayer groups to encourage others and an opportunity was given for people to express as interest in being part of a new group.

After further praise and worship, Fr Shaun O'Neill then guided people through personal reflections on five words from scripture on joy.

- I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:11)
- For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)
- By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice. (Philippians 4:4)
- Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

The day concluded with Mass in St Aidan's Church, celebrated by Fr Shaun O'Neill, with music provided by Paul Berry and members of the DCMA. Following a period of exposition, people were invited to receive a blessing from members of the CDSC team.

Photos are available to view [here](#).

A Mass of Hope for Pentecost

By Marie Wheeler

From many parts of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, people arrived at the Cathedral Church of St Mary, on Saturday 13 May, to celebrate a very special Mass organised by the CDSC. We were immediately struck by an atmosphere of joy as members of Couples for Christ, part of the Filipino community, practised their music for the occasion. They helped put us in a place of preparedness and expectancy as they led us in worship hymns for about twenty minutes before Mass started.

Mass was led by Fr Shaun O'Neill, assisted by Fr Noel Colahan and deacons Paddy Jackson and Frank O'Neill. The readings used were those for Pentecost. After hearing the first reading, where people of many languages who were gathered in Jerusalem were surprised to hear the Apostles speaking in their own language, we heard the three verses of the psalm read in Igbo, Tagalog and French.

The African Choir, who led us in the singing for Mass, brought the Book of the Gospel up to the altar in a joyful procession. Following the reading, Deacon Frank gave an inspiring homily in which he underlined the use of the word "each" in the first reading: the Holy Spirit comes to each one of us in a completely personal and very specific way.

The Prayers of Intercession, which linked the gifts of the Holy Spirit to present and future hopes, were spoken in English, Italian, Tagalog, Zulu and Anang.

The offertory was brought to the altar very joyfully by members of the African choir, singing and dancing their way forward with the gifts.

Just before the end of Mass, there was a short period of adoration in front of The Blessed Sacrament. Then, in the eucharistic presence of Jesus, we each had the opportunity to go forward and be given a blessing by members of the CDSC team, asking that we be imbued with hope for the present and for the future. This was very moving and a real experience of sharing and of togetherness.

Certainly, I left with a great feeling of peace and happiness, and, indeed, of hope, going forward. And, by the looks on people's faces and the joyful chatter, I wasn't the only one!

Photos from the Mass for Hope can be seen [here](#).

National and Regional News

News from beyond

News courtesy of CCR.org.uk by Andy Drozdzia

Joyous and Unforgettable day at OVERFLOW

Young and old gathered at OVERFLOW for an unforgettable day, celebrating the lively faith of the Ascent young people and being encouraged to spread the love of Jesus.

Over a thousand people at CCR'S OVERFLOW conference heard that the faith of young people in the Church is alive and active NOW – and the future is bright.

Many young people shared with CCR members gathered eagerly in Birmingham how the Holy Spirit is using the Ascent discipleship process to change their lives.

Hexham and Newcastle CDSC Secretary Alison Rebello told CCR: "The Ascent programme stories shared by youngsters were a highlight for the parent in me; to believe that, despite the peer pressure, they are still willing to embrace faith and practice it."

Holy Spirit sweeping across youth like wildfire.

OVERFLOW was the first national gathering organised by CHARIS England and Wales (CNSC), bringing together individuals, communities, prayer groups and movements in CCR, from across the UK. The Ascent is a youth discipleship process which is sweeping across today's youth like wildfire and raising up a new generation of disciples of Christ.

Marcus Carlsson, who graduated from the Ascent in Wigton, shared how the programme helped him to be more confident in his faith, and the Holy Spirit gave him courage to stand in front of a packed audience. Joined by Ascent leaders Jasmine de Kretser and Phil Hill, the young people then prayed over those gathered at Bethel in a prophetic and powerful moment.

Teresa Davies said: "Weren't they amazing. I could barely stand as they prayed over us. The Spirit was definitely moving." Geraldine Roche wrote: "Well done to the Ascent and their mentors. It gave me so much hope to see so many young people at the conference. Amazing."

'Get on your faces and cry out'

Dr Maria Heath opened the day with an emphasis on mission and God's love overflowing. She emphasised the importance of being open to the Spirit, and the prophetic was a key feature of the day. Anglican minister Dr Christopher Landau spoke movingly of the importance of unity as 'a vital component of mission' and relying on the Holy Spirit. He also highlighted and quoted a key scripture verse from OVERFLOW: 'How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity' (Psalm 133:1).

Michelle Moran shared a powerful word about being open to God's action in the present moment. She urged all gathered not to focus on history because God has so much for us now.

Bishop David Oakley gave an inspiring homily during Mass, encouraging those present to go and evangelise. He also encouraged a lifestyle of prayer. "Prayer doesn't have to be difficult," he said. "Just come before the Lord and let him love us."

During an inspiring day, American speakers Deacon Larry Oney and his wife Andi exhorted the faithful to pray with passion and to repent. "Revival begins with repentance," Deacon Larry said. "God will always accept a contrite heart. Get on your faces and cry out."

After crying out to God, the couple led a powerful shout to the Lord, to break down the 'walls of Jericho' within.

Praise and worship to the King

Praise and worship sessions were ably led by Fran McLean and her team of worshippers. They highlighted the importance of praising the Lord loud and long, singing such charismatic favourites as 'Raise a Hallelujah', 'King of Kings', and 'The Goodness of God', which became something of an anthem throughout the day.

A video was shown of Nicky Gumbel sharing with Dr Maria Heath about the importance of ecumenism, how the Church is exploding with growth around the world, and how CCR can play a vital part in revival and renewal.

Interspersed throughout the sessions were opportunities for networking and hearing testimonies of those in CCR – and how the fruits of the Spirit were evident in their lives, such as Em and Sammy Leakey, who gave a powerful witness to God working and moving in their ecumenical marriage.

A generous overflow of blessings

These testimonies were another highlight for Alison Rebello.

“I firmly believe that testimonies are the modern-day equivalent of stories and parables from the Bible, and they are the most potent tool for evangelisation in this day and age,” Alison said.

“The personal testimonies spread across the length of the day from various people, both in-person and through recorded video messages, gave us the impetus to keep connected with God through the lows and highs of life.”

“There certainly was a joyous and generous Overflow of blessings, as the theme rightly suggested, in terms of what we heard from Deacon Larry and his wife Andy from New Orleans. The number of “Amens” they wanted us to affirm, as they led the faithful who had turned up from all over the country, was phenomenal. The singing, praise, and worship provided much needed personal space to focus on God for our own good.”

As many reported feeling uplifted and moved by the day, the CNSC will now discern how to build on OVERFLOW and keep spreading the Gospel. Please pray for them.

Photos from OVERFLOW can be seen [here](#).

Insights from Realities and Prayer Groups

Prayer groups



We read on the international website for CHARIS “Present in the largest parishes and also in the humblest ones, prayer groups are the main actors of the great mission of CHARIS: “To share with everyone in the Church the grace of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit”.”

We currently know of seven charismatic prayer groups in our diocese. Details can be found [here](#). If you are in a prayer group which is not listed, please let us know.

We are pleased to share that, following our event at St Aidan’s in Ashington, a new prayer group has started in the Morpeth area. We are also aware of interest in forming new prayer groups in Hartlepool, Hexham and Gateshead. If you are interested in being in a prayer group in any of these places let us know and we can put people in touch with each other. John Wheeler and Fr Shaun O’Neill are happy to support people planning new prayers groups and can put them in touch with leaders of existing prayer groups who could also be a helpful source of information and encouragement.

News from Across the Diocese

Further opportunities



1. **Exalted Youth Retreat** – AFCM Newcastle is inviting youngsters aged 17-24 to join and take part in a 3-day Retreat to be held at Emmaus Youth Village, Consett, DH8 9BA from 8-10 September, 2023. The Youth Retreat is specifically focussing on students who are embarking on university life and Higher

Studies and will be run by AFCM ministers from Birmingham. It will begin at 10am on 8 September and finish at 4pm on 10 September. **The retreat is for youngsters of all communities and is not exclusive to the Indian community only.** For further details and booking please contact Santhosh Joseph 07545861400 or Deacon Alison Rebello 07931136243. You can register directly [here](#). Or alternatively, visit this [page](#) on the diocesan website.

2. On Saturday 4 November 2023 the Emmanuel Community will be hosting Fr Chris Thomas from Liverpool at St Mary's School, Newcastle. The theme will be 'Without a dream the people die'. More details to follow.

Advance notices

3. On Saturday 20 January 2024 the Emmanuel Community will be hosting David Wells at St Mary's School, Newcastle. More details will be made available nearer the time.

4. On Saturday 11 May 2024 we will be hosting a Mass for Pentecost again at St Mary's Cathedral.

Ecumenical renewal in Northumberland & Tyneside

Our monthly, 'Pockets Conversations' on Zoom continue to provide mutual encouragement and support for a scatter of individuals, couples and small groups in our region, and further afield. We are hosting an Away time at our house at the end of June with some of the like-minded people with whom we engage in our region. We are praying for increased momentum in what we are doing together.

As a group, we are planning a major Fire in the North gathering on Saturday 2 September. This will bring together leaders, church pioneers, evangelists, worship, prophetic, intercessors and wider view people from across Northumberland and the north-east to look at how we might encourage and nurture what God is already doing here!

The venue this time will be in Alnwick; and then, later in the autumn, we will be hosting an evangelistic weekend here – in north Northumberland, with our Manchester evangelist friend, Wayne Hudson. In February, he came across to meet some wider view people as well as local church pioneers. We believe this is part of a general focus on evangelism and harvest. We are calling in the 'strong wood' to help us, especially in prayer, as we feel that God has some "Mighty Oak" praying ones to stand with us.

For more information, please contact Bob and Mary Bain, 29 Grange Road, Shilbottle, Alnwick NE66 2XN; Mob: 07988564299 e-mail: bobbain@hotmail.co.uk